



Margaret Birch  
Provincial Secretary  
for Social Development

Ontario

William Davis, Premier

Government  
Publications

# Demographic Transition in Ontario

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A perspective on the 1980s



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# Demographic Transition in Ontario

A perspective on the 1980s

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# Introduction

This report is an overview of the population of Ontario and the demographic changes expected in the coming decade.

The major implications of these changes are considered for both the government and the private sector. A number of principles to guide government in policy and program development, as affected by demographic changes, are also outlined.

A few words of background are appropriate at this point. Demography is the statistical study of human populations: size; density; geographic distribution; age patterns; and the processes of birth, death and migration. The role of demographic data as an aid to planning is well recognized. In business and industry, for example, demographic analyses are used to develop markets for products and services. In governments, where important initiatives and significant resources are focussed on identifiable population groups, anticipating changes in these groups is both sound management and responsible planning.

For two reasons, demographic statistics are commonly associated with planning for the future. First, there are plentiful data on the subject. Second, since population changes are described in numerical terms, they appear to be predictable.

Identifying important factors that will influence the future helps to single out areas of change and to highlight opportunities for action. It must be remembered, however, that predicting population changes is a less than perfect science. Even when projected with great accuracy, the numbers are often of less significance than several other factors that can't be predicted; these include economic and social changes, and technological innovation.

In the past two decades, Ontario has seen significant changes in demographic patterns. The mid-Sixties marked the end of the high birth rate and the "baby boom" which followed World War II. Fairly rapid growth in total population continued, however, sustained largely by high levels of immigration. Since the mid-Seventies, the growth rate in total population has moderated and will continue to decline.

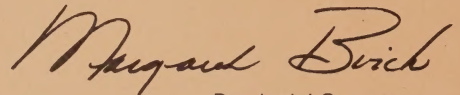
As part of overall planning and policy development, the Government of Ontario has been conducting a review of demographic changes, or "transitions." The objective is to achieve a greater awareness and understanding of on-going demographic patterns, to identify the major implications of these trends for planning within the public and private sectors, and ultimately to

achieve a greater capacity to sustain an overall quality of life for the people of Ontario.

Any attempt to look at demographic transitions from a province-wide perspective encounters difficulties. For example, demographic information is perceived in different ways by different individuals and communities. The consequences of demographic change can be quite different for the private sector and the government.

Also, the importance of demographic information must always be measured in the broader context of ever-changing social values, technological breakthroughs, and economic and political developments.

It is hoped that the information in this report will be helpful to all who are concerned with planning for the future.



*Provincial Secretary  
for Social Development*

# Major Demographic Trends

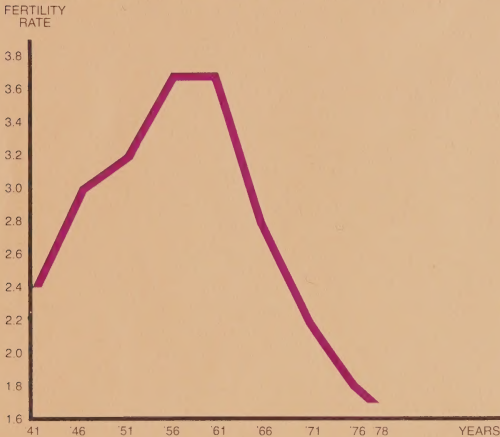
In simplest terms, demographic changes result from the effects of births, deaths and migration patterns in and out of Canada and Ontario.

## Births, Deaths and Migration

*Births.* The fertility rate provides a measurement, at one point in time, of the average number of children a woman can be expected to bear in her lifetime.

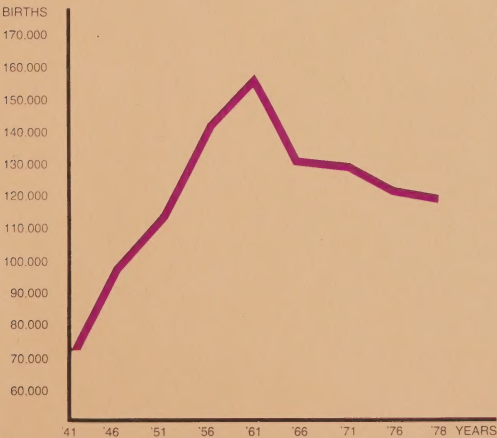
During the Depression, the fertility rate in Ontario declined moderately, from about 2.7 births per woman to about 2.2 births just before World War II. This trend reversed abruptly following World War II.

FIGURE 1: AVERAGE NUMBER OF BIRTHS PER FEMALE, AGE 15 TO 49, 1941 TO 1978



The fertility rate began to climb in 1946, reaching 3.8 births per woman in 1960. This increase in fertility and in the total number of births during the period from 1946 to 1965, has been labelled the “baby boom.”

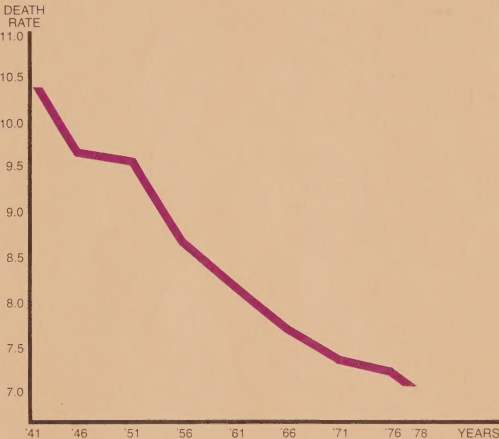
FIGURE 2: TOTAL NUMBER OF LIVE BIRTHS, 1941 TO 1978



A sudden drop in fertility began in the mid-Sixties and continued through the Seventies. Current fertility rates are about 1.7 births per woman, a rate below the “replacement level” which is (in theory) required to maintain the same total population over a long period. Reasons for the decline include delays in bearing first children, more effective methods of contraception, more women in the work force, and social attitudes that place less emphasis on the traditional family format.

*Deaths.* A second determinant of population change is the death rate. Deaths per thousand Ontario population have declined from an average annual rate of 9.7 in 1946 to 7.1 in 1978.

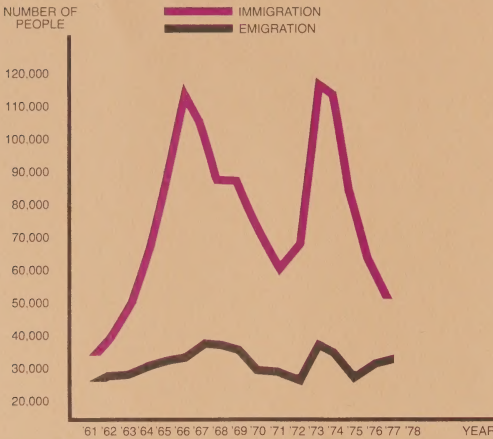
FIGURE 3: DEATH RATE PER 1000 POPULATION, 1941 TO 1978



*Migration.* Net migration into Ontario reflects population exchanges between Ontario and all other places. Figure 4 illustrates how volatile migration patterns can be in response to a wide range of factors both inside and outside Ontario. Since 1978, there have been significant gains in population from Quebec and foreign countries and emigration from Ontario primarily to the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. The population changes from these sources, during this period, have been in relative balance.



**FIGURE 4: IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION, 1961-62 TO 1977-78**



### Total Population

Projecting future populations means taking what is known about the number of people in each age group and making reasonable assumptions about births, deaths and migrations in the future. Some forecasts, such as the death rate and the number of people in older age groups, can be made with confidence. Others are notoriously difficult to predict, even for a ten-year period. Fertility rates, number of births and migration patterns fall into this latter category.

Projections for Ontario show a continuation of current low fertility rates and low migration levels. *The combined effect of births, deaths and migration on total population is expected to be a more moderate rate of growth during the decade.*

The impact of the earlier baby boom will still be evident in the Eighties. Children born in the early part of the boom matured to child-bearing age by the mid-1960s; in the early 1980s, the last of the baby boom children will enter young adulthood and thereby inflate the population of child-bearing age. This "echo" of the baby boom is expected to partially offset the current low fertility rate.

Two measures of population are particularly important: (1) the *growth rate* which is the annual percentage change in total population; (2) the *proportion* of the total population in various age groups.

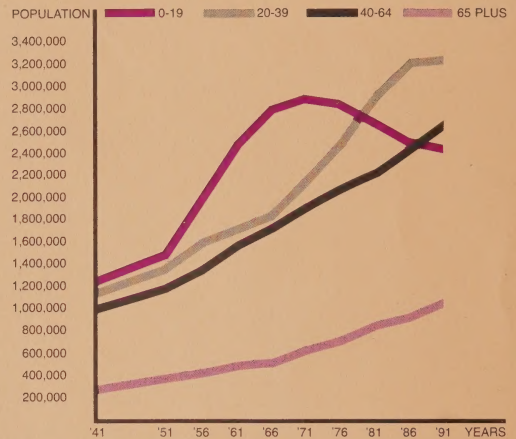
### Growth Rates

During the 1960s, the total population grew at an average of 2.4% per year. The rate slowed to an average of 1.5% per year in the first half

of the Seventies, and to 1.1% in the second half. In 1979, a further slowdown took place, to a rate of only 0.7%.

*Of the total growth in Ontario's population since 1976, projected over the rest of this century, about 70% will have occurred by the end of this decade. By the end of the 1980s, 95% of the province's projected turn-of-the-century population will be here.*

**FIGURE 5: TOTAL POPULATION BY BROAD AGE GROUPS, 1941 TO 1991**



### Broad Age Groups

The growth rate of the total population does not reflect the changes in age structure which are anticipated in the 1980s.

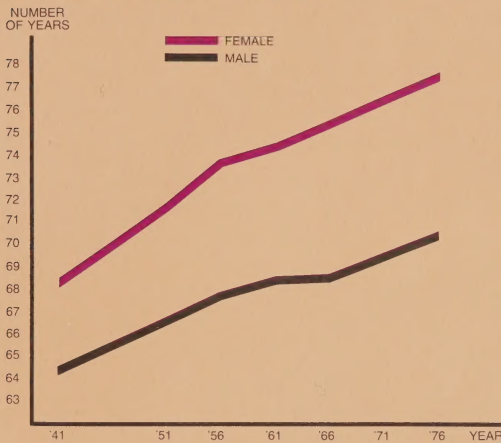
As the last of Ontario's baby boom children move into their early twenties, the proportion of the population in the 20 to 39 age group will increase—from 31% in 1976 to 34% early in the 1990s. This group will experience the largest numerical growth of all age groups. During the same period, the proportion in the 0 to 19 age group will decrease—from 35% in 1976 to 26% in 1991.

The 40 to 64 age group will grow from 26% of the population in 1976 to 28% in 1991.

The 65-plus group will grow from 9% in 1976 to 12% in 1991.

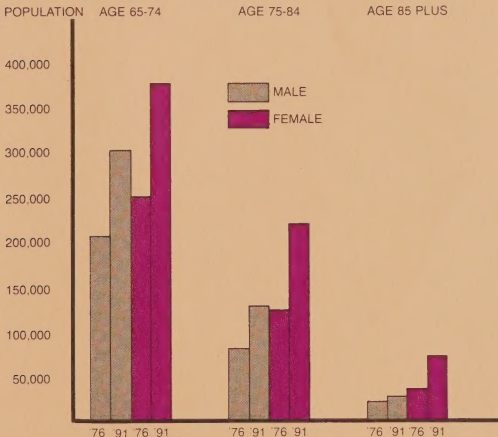
Longevity statistics will reflect these trends as well. Life expectancy at birth has increased to 71 years for men and 78 years for women—increases of 4 years for men and 6 years for women over the levels of the early 1950s.

**FIGURE 6: AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH, MEN AND WOMEN, 1941 TO 1976**



The lower death rate and greater longevity among women are contributing to a growing proportion of women among the elderly, with the highest proportion in the 85-plus age group. One consequence is the growing number of households made up of single, elderly women living alone.

**FIGURE 7: POPULATION 65 AND OVER, MALE AND FEMALE, 1976 AND 1991**



Concern for a growing elderly population might lead one to equate demographic transition with the process of aging. However, they are not always synonymous. Demographic transitions will be felt in *all* age groups, although the implications for policies and programs will vary from group to group.

It should be remembered that the proportion of the population in the 65-plus age group was relatively stable at about 8% during the Fifties and Sixties. Now, with the maturing baby boom

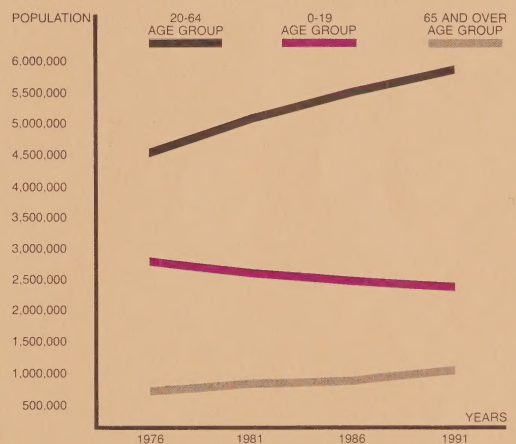
and a drop in the fertility rate, that proportion has begun to increase. *The proportion of the elderly, 65-plus, is expected to continue rising during the rest of this century and beyond. However our elderly population will not, even then, exceed levels commonly experienced and effectively maintained today in Europe and other parts of the world.*

### Dependency Ratios

Dependency ratios show the balance between the number of people in what is regarded as the productive segment of society and those who, because of age, are not in the work force. The latter are defined as the 65-plus group and youth, 19 and under.

In 1976, there were six people of working age (20 to 64) for each person 65 or older. By 1991, this ratio will probably decline to *five* working people for each elderly person.

**FIGURE 8: AGE AND YOUTH DEPENDENCY, 1976 TO 1991**



However, as the baby boom children pass into the working age group and as fertility rates decline, there will be a marked increase in the number of working age persons per youth. In 1976, there were approximately 1½ people of working age (20 to 64) for each youth (0 to 19) in Ontario. By 1991, this ratio is expected to rise to 2½ workers for each youth.

The 1980s may see a slight increase in the ratio of working age population relative to the total aged-plus-youth population. This will provide an opportunity for government and business to anticipate later, more dramatic changes in these ratios—especially the increase in the elderly component and its implications for pension financing, and for health and social service support.



Geographic Variations

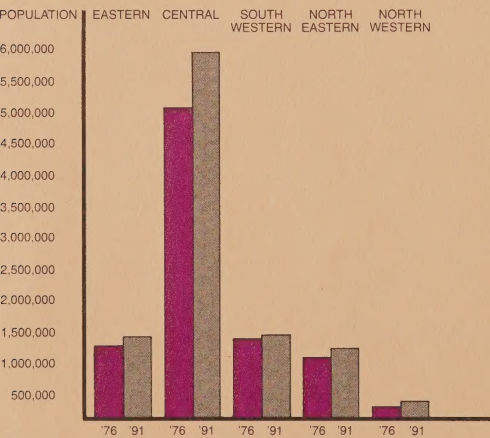
More than two-thirds of the increase in Ontario's population from 1976 to the end of the 1980s is expected to occur in the central region of Southern Ontario. This area extends from Brant and Waterloo in the west, to Muskoka in the north, and Haliburton and Peterborough in the east. This growth rate is slightly faster than in other regions of the province.

Four Regional Municipalities will alone account for three-quarters of the region's growth, and for nearly half of the entire Province's growth. These are Peel, York, Durham and Halton.

Even within the expanding metropolitan areas of Southern Ontario, pockets of declining population are expected. Metropolitan Toronto, in contrast to its surrounding municipalities, but buoyed by an energy-sensitive economy, will experience modest growth.

There are several discernable trends brought about by varied and complex pressures. One trend is towards settling in suburban and exurban areas. At the same time, it might be expected that if gasoline costs rise dramatically as a proportion of income, then there may be a tendency to return to the city centre. Singles and childless couples may lead this movement towards urban core living.

FIGURE 9: POPULATIONS BY REGIONS, 1976 AND 1991



Households and Family Formations

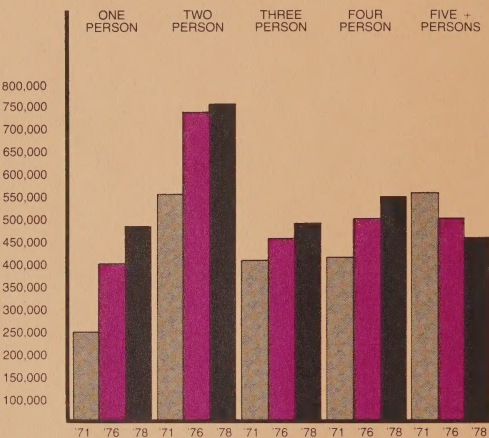
A "household" consists of one person or a group of people who occupy a single dwelling. Several factors are altering the pattern of household formations and changing the family format as we know it.

The majority of households in Ontario retain the

traditional family unit of husband and wife, with or without children. One-person households, consisting of a young adult or an elderly female living alone, are becoming more numerous. One-parent families brought about by separation, divorce, death or out-of-wedlock birth, and households made up of non-related individuals who live together, are also increasing.

The one-person household has experienced the most dramatic growth in recent years.

FIGURE 10: SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS -1971, 1976, 1978





# Major Implications

This section links the demographic trends described above to the economic, social and environmental life of the province.

## The Economy

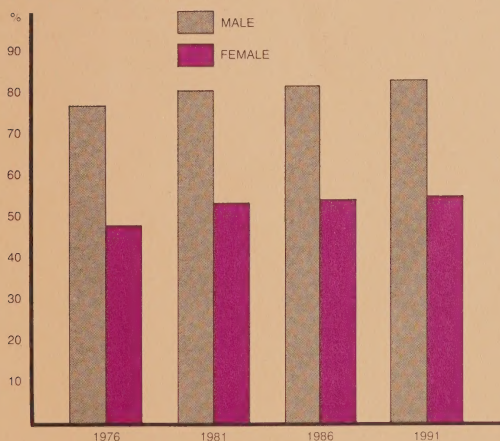
### 1. Labour Force

As the last wave of the baby boom enters the province's working life, the labour force will grow to the mid-1980s at a faster rate than the population. In the second half of the decade, this growth rate will slow down. Participation rates, particularly for women, will rise throughout the decade.

*Major implication: the need to sustain high levels of job creation in the early 1980s.* (The pressure created by new entrants into the economy and labour force will not be as severe as in the 1970s, when Ontario had an enviable record of job creation.)

By the end of this decade, competition will intensify for qualified workers in a number of fields, creating both opportunities for many and a need for specialized training and retraining programs.

**FIGURE 11: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES, BY SEX, 1976-1991**



### 2. Leisure and Recreation

The largest growth in the labour force will be in the 25 to 44 age group. A higher level of educational attainment will be evident, as well as more leisure time.

*Implications: a better-educated population with more discretionary time available can be expected to seek a broad range of leisure options. The demand for entertainment, culture, sports and travel opportunities is expected to increase.*

*Travel.* Travel, in particular, is expected to expand dramatically owing to more people in the work force, more women working, more one-person households, more families with fewer children, and more families with two incomes.

The marketing of travel and its related activities is likely to focus heavily on singles of all ages and families with fewer or no children.

*The elderly.* This group will present a special challenge to Ontario's tourism industry; the population will expand in the 1980s and may continue to seek more temperate climates during the winter months.

*Labour.* Leisure industries have traditionally relied on a seasonal labour force of 15 to 19 year olds. A labour shortage in this age group could develop by the mid-Eighties and lead to new opportunities for alternative labour sources, notably the elderly and the retired.

### 3. Other Activities

Both public and private sectors of the economy will be called upon to adapt to expected demographic changes.

*Industry.* Some industries, particularly housing and related durable goods, may face moderating demand. Other industries will need to shift their focus from children and youth to a more mature market of young adults and the elderly. Examples: leisure and travel industries, retailing, restauranting and home-oriented services.

These trends offer opportunities for job creation, retraining and alternative labour groups (elderly, retired, part-time, etc.).

*Energy.* Slower population growth is expected to mean slower growth in consumer demand for electricity. Making use of existing electrical generating capacity will help to reduce the province's dependence on insecure oil supplies.

Energy policy will focus on reducing the demand for oil and substituting other more available energy supplies, including electricity.

*Automobiles.* In the Eighties, the driving age population will increase. The dominant form of transportation will continue to be the automobile, although significant improvements in average kilometres per litre can be expected.

*Agriculture.* New technologies, combined with a moderating population growth, will enable the province to maintain its present level of food supply against demand. However, more production, marketing, processing and transportation can increase our level of supply and, at the same time, achieve a closer balance between

exports and imports of agricultural and food products.

*Government Expenditures.* In certain areas of the economy, government expenditures may have to be redirected in relation to needed private sector initiatives.

In the past, however, changes in demography have not been the most significant contributor to growth in overall government spending, nor are anticipated demographic changes expected to be the predominant influence over expenditures in the near future, with the possible exception of health care services (particularly for the elderly).

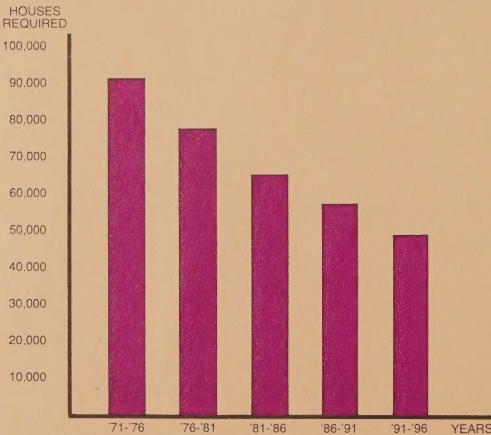
## The Living Environment

### 1. Housing Activity

The rate of household formations is down, and the tendency is towards smaller households. The housing industry is very sensitive to these trends.

New housing requirements are expected to be lower than present levels by at least 5,000 units annually by 1985. (It should be noted that housing production in 1980 may be well below requirements because of uncertain economic conditions and high interest rates.) Renewal of existing neighbourhoods will become a central activity.

**FIGURE 12: ANNUAL HOUSING REQUIREMENTS, 5-YEAR AVERAGES, 1971-1996**



In the Eighties, demand for senior citizens' housing and public housing will change minimally, and can be accommodated within existing supply.

The average age of housing stock will increase. This, together with smaller family size and the likelihood of growing interest in urban-core living,

will stimulate the rehabilitation and conversion of existing houses, and lead to employment opportunities in these fields. Moreover, the smaller units established will create new markets for space-saving furnishings and convenience services.

There are numerous implications for urban transportation resources, for the residential tax base, and for the need to coordinate regional planning.

### 2. Transportation Facilities

New road systems require years of lead time for planning, land acquisition and construction. Such infrastructure, once in place, can create jobs and stimulate regional economic development.

*Decisions on future road systems and/or alternative concepts should be made now because, by 1991, 95% of Ontario's total end-of-century population will be resident in the province.*

The driving age population of Ontario will expand; the number of people in the labour force will increase. As a result, the average travelling distance between residence and workplace may increase, and may bring added pressure on transportation resources and public transit systems. These trends offer opportunities to emphasize energy issues in urban planning, including the introduction of incentives for the development of mass transit systems.



### 3. The Environment

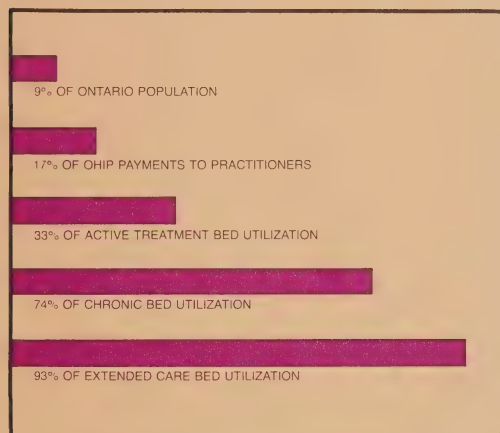
The direct effects of demographic transitions on the environment are not expected to be significant. However, related factors could have a strong impact on environmental issues. Two examples: the growth of retirement communities and the increasing year-round use of cottages.

### The Social Environment

#### 1. Health and Social Services

The health care system is extremely sensitive to the needs of Ontario's growing population of elderly residents. The 65-plus age group makes up less than 10% of the province's population, yet accounts for almost one-third of the province's health service costs and utilization.

**FIGURE 13: UTILIZATION OF HEALTH SERVICES BY 65-PLUS AGE GROUP, 1978**



The 65-plus group is made up of three "decades": the 65-74 age group, the 75-84 age group, and the 85-plus group. The older two "decades" are significantly more vulnerable to the problems of aging—to chronic illness, declining physical condition and inability to function independently. The very aged, those 85 and up whose needs are the greatest, will be increasing proportionately much more rapidly than the relatively healthier 65-74 age group.

The trend to one-person households is particularly evident among elderly women. There will be a growing need for services to assist the elderly in independent living and to compensate for social isolation.

The most obvious impact of demographic transition will be in the health and social services fields. Increases in services and expenditures are expected if present patterns of service and need continue. This is particularly evident in health care activities.

As noted earlier, in the immediate future aging of the population will occur gradually and then take on increasing momentum at the end of this century and into the next. Society's attitudes towards the elderly, our health behaviour and habits, and our traditional patterns of health service reliance and utilization all change slowly. *While the initial impact of an aging population on the health system will be relatively modest in this decade, the social and economic forces stimulated by these trends suggest that initiatives be taken now.*

The early symptoms of increasing services and costs will appear in nursing and chronic care facilities, and in community services for the elderly. By the end of this century, the heavier demand will cover the spectrum of services for the elderly—in residential settings, in services within the community (home care, drugs, community services, etc.) and even in training of staff for geriatric services. These trends have already been recognized in planning for the elderly and in current health promotion/disease prevention initiatives.

The potential impact of demographic trends on other social service programs is more modest. In residential and non-residential social services for the aged, and in social assistance, demography is expected to contribute to moderately higher expenditures.

With a low fertility rate and fewer children per family, services to children and social benefits to families with children, may involve adjustments to a smaller client group.

*Pensions: advance planning will be required in this decade to ensure secure and adequate support for the burgeoning elderly population of the next decade.*

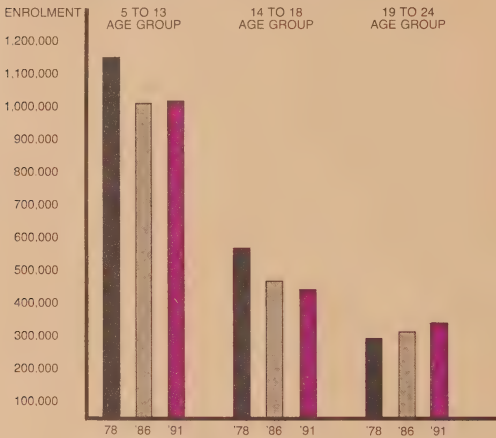
It's important to remember that a number of non-demographic factors which relate to the economy, to social and family issues and to policies in other areas, will have a strong bearing on the future demand for social services.

2. Education

*Students.* To the mid-1980s, elementary and secondary enrolments will decline throughout the province. However, in some communities increases will occur owing to patterns of migration and urban growth.

Post-secondary enrolment is expected to increase, reflecting the pattern of births flowing through the educational system and greater participation in higher education. Other contributing factors are rapidly changing technology and smaller family groupings which create both the incentive and the opportunity for further training.

FIGURE 14: ENROLMENT OF SELECTED GROUPS AT THE ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY LEVELS - 1978, 1986, 1991



As a result of this heightened interest in training, colleges of applied arts and technology, already operating at full capacity, may be expected to attract more students while universities face declining enrolments.

*Teaching personnel.* As technology alters the demand for particular skills, many individuals will have to seek retraining. Some teachers may lose jobs; others will be a valuable resource to implement these retraining programs. With thoughtful management, this period of change can be turned to the advantage of both individuals and the community.

*Facilities.* Opportunities created by these changes include redirecting some educational facilities to other uses, and broadening the perspective on continuing education and the development of skills.

3. Justice

In the midst of our rapidly changing and inter-dependent world, crime and justice are complex

subjects. Many factors—education levels, economic conditions, legislative changes and public attitudes, to single out a few—may minimize the importance of predictions made solely on the basis of population trends.

The criminal justice system is, to the largest extent, involved with the 15 to 29 age group. With declines, as a proportion of the total population, expected during the Eighties, criminal activity usually associated with this age group may be expected to decline.

Definitions themselves will help to determine the amount and type of crime in the community. What is considered a crime today may simply be a nuisance by the year 2000; conversely, pollution of the environment, as one example, may be viewed much more seriously in ten or twenty years. Recent achievements in electronic technology have brought many benefits, but some perils as well. Opportunities for “computer crime” will increase and perhaps alter the very character of crime as we know it.

A number of other factors may have an impact on the criminal justice system: increased female work participation, labour market structure, unemployment, inflation and urban sprawl.

While it cannot be predicted with certainty that crime in the 1980s will increase, it seems likely that at least the *complexity* of crime will increase and call for innovative responses.



# Demographics in Perspective

Demographic data are essential to planning and decision-making in both the government and the private sector. The information provides a basis for developing and evaluating programs and products, for determining service delivery or marketing strategies, and for selecting policies to achieve commercial and social goals.

Much of the planning requires significant lead time.

The creation of road systems, industrial facilities, hospitals, schools, housing and recreational sites, new communities and services, and other physical infrastructure often involves years of development and requires a reasonable understanding of demographic likelihoods.

It's important to remember, however, that demographic considerations are neither perfect nor predominant indicators of the future. *This section outlines a perspective on demographics in the context of other factors and considerations.*

Demographic analysis provides only a *limited* basis on which to anticipate future events in this decade. Demographic change is a gradual process. The most significant and cost-related trend of all purely demographic phenomena is the increase in the number and per cent of aged in the population, and this will not become really pronounced until after the turn of the century. In the 1980s, other factors will be far more significant determinants of the social and economic health of the province, and of expenditure growth in government.

A number of critical factors should be considered in social and economic policy: the general economic climate, including national and international conditions; emerging areas of technological breakthrough; considerations of energy sources and uses.

Various social policies will be of concern. These include levels of income and social supports for disadvantaged segments of the population; pension and retirement policies; housing concerns; and the competition among all areas of public and private endeavour for scarce financial and personnel resources.

Important, too, will be societal attitudes towards acceptance of expanding groups. One example is the elderly; society's attitudes will help to determine their ability to maintain independent and productive lives.

Such factors cannot be isolated from demographics. Relationships between population changes on the one hand, and social, economic and behavioural factors on the other, are key issues in planning for the future. An understand-

ing of demographics is essential, therefore, to any overall planning and policy-making process.

Taken in combination, all these factors – demographic transitions, technology, economic climate, societal attitudes – will determine the various needs, dependencies, opportunities and capabilities that will characterize the future. It will be the shared responsibility of government policy and private initiative to anticipate and adapt to this future, to facilitate or impede as appropriate.

To help guide government in this responsibility, eleven concepts relating to demographic policies are suggested.

## Concepts for Policy and Program Development in Relation to Demographic Transition

### 1. *Demography is a platform for broad social planning*

The value of understanding demographic trends is not limited to simply planning for changes in services and programs. In a more general vein, a full understanding of demographics and their relationships to economic and social factors provides a basis for planning to sustain and support the quality of life in Ontario.

Monitoring and analysis of demographic trends and their impact is an important step in policy-making.

### 2. *Demographic policies are of two types*

Demographic policies may be passive or active. Passive policies view trends in population as being determined by factors *outside* the influence of policies. Passive policies are developed to adapt to, or accommodate these external trends.

Active policies, on the other hand, can be developed to shape demographic phenomena. Examples: immigration policies, or policies designed to influence the location of population settlements or industrial developments.

### 3. *Demographic changes create opportunities*

As noted earlier, demographic transitions can create opportunities for initiative and adaptation. Trends should be examined for their potential and capitalized upon.

### 4. *Demographic myths should be avoided*

Demographic transition is not necessarily synonymous with the "aging" of the population. While aging is important, fairly predictable and widely publicized, it will not assume its greatest significance until early in the 21st century. Even then it will only achieve levels which already exist in Europe.

Other more imminent changes among youth and the younger adult populations should be examined for their demographic impact when consideration is given to policy alternatives.

Demographic projections can also give the impression that programs and services for declining populations can be reduced, thereby creating a reservoir of resources for reallocation to expanding populations. It doesn't work this smoothly. Obstacles to such reallocations include prevailing societal values and goals, unexpected or localized events, and the resistance of affected groups.

### 5. *Demographic transition is a local phenomenon*

Demographic trends do not occur uniformly across Ontario. For example, some population centres are declining within growing regions. There may be areas of increasing student enrolment in the overall trend to declining enrolments. Entire suburban housing subdivisions are experiencing the "aging" process as family profiles change dramatically, yet many small northern communities have large proportions of young people.

Policies developed in response to emerging demographic directions must be flexible to local conditions, and to changes over time. The ability to coordinate planning and development across local and regional areas is essential.

### 6. *Selective responses are best*

The impact of demographic data can vary from one locality to another, and from one population to another.

This suggests *selective*, rather than universal, program responses to situations and opportunities created by demographic transitions.

### 7. *Increasing private initiatives*

The ability to identify and respond to changing

local conditions is best demonstrated at the local level. More responsibility and increased initiatives may be undertaken by the private sector, the community, voluntary agencies, families and individuals.

### 8. *Demographic effects vary*

The significance of demographic trends will vary for different industries and areas of government. The magnitude, amount of time until the effects are first felt, duration of the effects, and the magnitude of secondary, indirect or multiplier effects all could vary significantly.

Many opportunities for innovation lie in housing, tourism, transportation, agriculture, communications and other private sector industry, education, health and social services.

### 9. *Physical facilities must be adaptable*

In a period of slow growth in population and the economy, special recognition must be given to the importance of flexibility in infrastructure. Both public and private sectors will favour investment in such flexibility—for example, the ability to convert to alternative uses or markets in response to changing demographics.

### 10. *Alternative resources should be explored*

There are a number of personnel resources available to meet local needs: the retired elderly, increased leisure time, part-time employment, retraining and career changes.

### 11. *Job creation is a key role*

Job creation will be an important focus for private and public demographic policy in the early Eighties. Later in this century, skill training and retraining for new careers will assume greater significance.









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